STATE OF MINNESOTA
## Office of the State Auditor
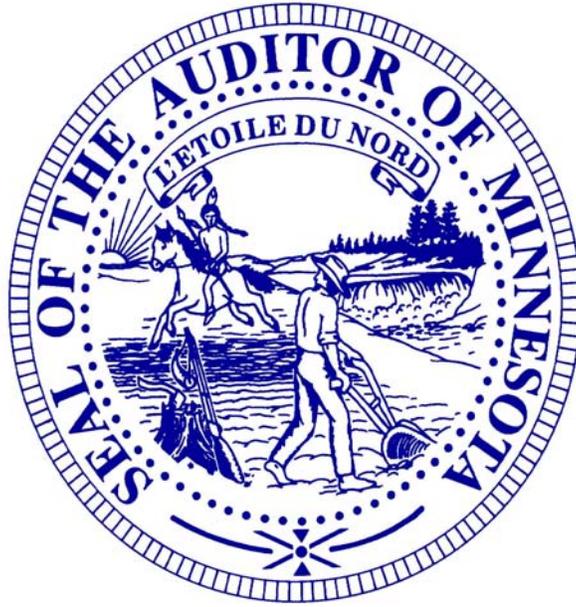
Rebecca Otto
State Auditor

Best Practices Review:

Collaboration Part 1: Initiating, Building, and Maintaining Governmental Relationships

Description of the Office of the State Auditor

The mission of the Office of the State Auditor is to oversee local government finances for Minnesota taxpayers by helping to ensure financial integrity and accountability in local governmental financial activities.

Through financial, compliance, and special audits, the State Auditor oversees and ensures that local government funds are used for the purposes intended by law and that local governments hold themselves to the highest standards of financial accountability.

The State Auditor performs approximately 150 financial and compliance audits per year and has oversight responsibilities for over 3,300 local units of government throughout the state. The office currently maintains five divisions:

Audit Practice - conducts financial and legal compliance audits of local governments;

Government Information - collects and analyzes financial information for cities, towns, counties, and special districts;

Legal/Special Investigations - provides legal analysis and counsel to the Office and responds to outside inquiries about Minnesota local government law as well as investigates allegations of misfeasance, malfeasance, and nonfeasance in local government;

Pension - monitors investment, financial, and actuarial reporting for approximately 730 public pension funds; and

Tax Increment Financing - promotes compliance and accountability in local governments' use of tax increment financing through financial and compliance audits.

The State Auditor serves on the State Executive Council, State Board of Investment, Land Exchange Board, Public Employees Retirement Association Board, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, and the Rural Finance Authority Board.

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Best Practices Review:

Collaboration Part 1: Initiating, Building, and Maintaining Governmental Relationships
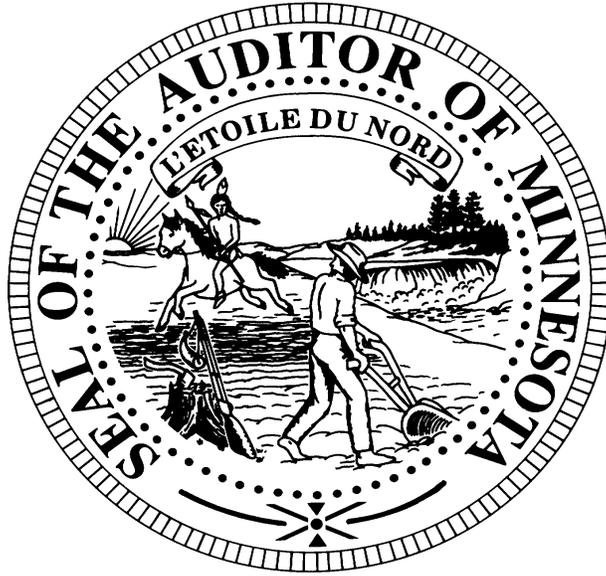
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Preface

The Office of the State Auditor (OSA) conducts best practices reviews that "examine the procedures and practices used to deliver local government services, determine the methods of local government service delivery, identify variations in cost and effectiveness, and identify practices to save money or provide more effective service delivery." The best practices reviews include recommendations to improve the cost-effectiveness of services.[1]

This Review is part one in a three-part series on collaboration in government. Its focus is initiating, building, and maintaining relationships between local governments and community partners. This topic was suggested by the Collaborative Governance Council (CGC). [2]

In the course of its work, the CGC found that the biggest impediments to cooperation and collaboration for local governments were related to: (1) lack of trust, (2) finances, and (3) power. The establishment of relationships between neighboring entities is essential to avoiding or overcoming each of these impediments.[3] Working relationships are most likely to succeed in communities that already have a history of working together successfully.

The CGC concluded that a series on best practices for collaboration in government conducted by the Office of the State Auditor would be beneficial. The CGC suggested that one of the parts focus specifically on relationships between local governments and community partners. The State Auditor's Best Practices Advisory Committee agreed that this was a timely topic for a Review, particularly in light of tight budgets and continued political pressure to reform and redesign local governments.[4]

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[1] Minn. Stat. § 6.78.

[2] The CGC was established by the Legislature in 2010, and the State Auditor serves as its Chair. The CGC's membership includes representatives from the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC); the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC); the Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT); the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA); Education Minnesota; the Service Employees International Union (SEIU); and the Association of Federal, State, City and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). Minn. Stat. § 6.81.

[3] Office of the State Auditor, State of Minnesota, "Collaborative Governance Council Legislative Report 2011," http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/other/councils/CollaborativeGovernance/Collaborative_Governance_Council_Legislative_Report.pdf.

[4] The Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from the AMC, the LMC, the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities, the MAT, the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association, and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators. Minn. Stat. § 6.78.

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Introduction

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." - *Henry Ford*

From joint purchases and shared services to joint powers agreements, local governments in Minnesota have been working together with their neighbors for decades. Surveys conducted by the League of Minnesota Cities in 1992 and 2003 identified almost 1,700 cooperative agreements and a broad range of services and programs for which cities cooperated with other local governmental units in an efficient and cost-effective manner.[1]

Local governments in Minnesota have generally seen a reduction in state and federal aids over the last ten years. In addition, political pressure to "reform/redesign/innovate" government continues. In difficult economic times, working with other local governments and community partners can be beneficial.

Studies show that the key to any successful working relationship is trust. Working relationships between local governments have unique challenges. These challenges include long-standing issues such as jurisdictional battles, fears of annexation, power struggles, and even hockey team rivalries.

Some researchers suggest a prior trusting relationship is a necessary prerequisite to successful collaboration. Trusting relationships "derive out of repeated interactions over time," making such prerequisite a practical problem to any entity that has not had a previous relationship or where previous relationships have not promoted trust.[2]

Part one of this series on collaboration focuses on how to encourage successful working relationships between local governments and community partners. Specifically, it focuses on initiating, building, and maintaining relationships at the local government level.

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[1] *See* League of Minnesota Cities' Risk Management Information Memo: "Cities Across Minnesota Cooperating to Provide Services and Perform Functions: A Review of Cooperative Agreements," http://www.lmc.org/page/1/joint-powers.jsp.
[2] Vangen, Siv; Huxham, Chris, "Nurturing Collaborative Relations: Building Trust in Interorganizational Collaboration," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, March 2003.

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Scope and Methodology

The goal of this Review is to identify the steps to best practices for building and maintaining successful working relationships between local governments and their community partners. To gather information for this Review, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) conducted a survey of local government officials regarding building and maintaining relationships between neighboring local governments and community partners. The survey was sent to 3,221 local government entities including 854 cities, 1,785 towns, 495 school districts, and 87 counties. The OSA received 468 responses from the survey.[7]

Follow-up interviews were conducted with some of the local government respondents. Based on these interviews, an additional questionnaire was sent to obtain detailed information on how strong working relationships were built and maintained with other local governments and community partners.

This Review contains case studies of local governments located in both the Metro Area and Greater Minnesota. Important geographical differences exist between entities in Greater Minnesota and the Metro Area. Greater distance between entities in Greater Minnesota tends to reduce opportunities to network. Conversely, a greater concentration of population and closer proximity of entities in the Metro Area provides more networking opportunities. Opportunities to network are conducive to building and maintaining relationships.

The OSA conducted a literature review to identify different methods of building and maintaining working relationships between local governments and community partners to prepare for future cooperative/collaborative efforts.

The OSA wants to thank all of the local government officials who responded to the survey and participated in follow-up interviews and questionnaires. Without their participation, this Review could not have been written. We also want to thank the CGC for its suggestion of the topic and the State Auditor's Advisory Committee for its strong support of the topic and for its suggestions of additional topics to be included in the series of Reviews on Collaboration.

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[7] A concurrent survey on consolidation conducted by the Office of the Legislative Auditor may have impacted the survey response rate.

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Steps to Best Practices

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Steps to Best Practices

<u>Initiating, Building, and Maintaining Successful Working Relationships</u>

The following steps have been identified as essential to best practices for initiating, building, and maintaining relationships between local governments and community partners:

Step 1. Initiating and Building Relationships

1. **Identify Potential Partners:** Potential partners may include other units of local government, state government, nonprofits, business, higher education institutions, and the tribal community.

2. **Arrange Informal Meetings or Networking Opportunities:** A local government can provide opportunities for elected leaders and staff to meet on an informal basis. Informal meetings could occur over lunches, at coffee or at area meetings. Informal meetings are valuable, even if the entities have no current plans to work together on a project. Informal meetings and networking opportunities encourage discussion so that relationships can develop naturally.

3. **Arrange Formal Meetings:** A local government can convene a formal meeting to explore areas of common interest and need. It is helpful to have a strong leader who can invite leadership from other entities and who will facilitate the meeting. Whenever possible, the meeting should be held at a neutral site such as a local community college, a library, a community center, or a restaurant with a meeting room.[1]

4. **Take Advantage of Existing Professional and Personal Relationships:** A local government can take advantage of existing personal and professional relationships with neighboring local officials and community partners to build relationships.

5. **Invite Others to Participate in an Event or Opportunity:** A local government can build relationships with neighboring entities by inviting participation in a mutually beneficial event or opportunity. Small, low-risk projects that succeed help establish trust, respect, and confidence between entities.

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[1] A collaborative effort of the U.S. Department of Education and the Regional Educational Laboratory Network, "Putting the Pieces Together Comprehensive School-Linked Strategies for Children and Families," http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/css/ppt/putting.htm.

Step 2. Building and Maintaining Relationships

1. **Small-Group Approach:** Studies show that small groups work together better than large groups do, and tend to be more successful.[2] Keep a working group small.

2. **Small-Wins Approach:** A **"**small-wins approach" can help build and maintain a trusting relationship.[3] A group should identify and select cooperative opportunities that have the best chance for immediate success and the greatest potential to benefit all participants. An early success builds confidence and trust and helps maintain the strong relationship needed for successful future endeavors.[4]

3. **Regular and Open Communication:** Working together requires open communication.[5] Good communication can be achieved by holding regular, purposeful meetings and by using telephone, e-mail, and fax to communicate between meetings.[6] Regular progress reports on projects that have been undertaken by the group are important. If a problem occurs, the problem and its resolution must be communicated quickly to the participants.

4. **Good Process:** Meetings must be run with a credible and open process. At the beginning, all participants should agree on who will chair the meeting and on how the meeting will be conducted. The chair should model respect for all. Ideally, discussions during meetings with good process will be honest, all members will have an opportunity to speak, and the members will be receptive to different points of view. If a good meeting process can be achieved, members will be willing to invest the energy and time needed to implement cooperative/collaborative efforts.[7]

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[2] London, Scott, "Collaboration and Community," http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/ppcc.html.

[3] Vangen, Siv; Huxham, Chris, "Nurturing Collaborative Relations: Building Trust in Interorganizational Collaboration," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, March 2003.

[4] Vangen, Siv; Huxham, Chris, "Nurturing Collaborative Relations: Building Trust in Interorganizational Collaboration," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, March 2003 & Michigan Suburbs Alliance, A Brief Primer on Regional Collaboration, Centers for Regional Excellence Program, http://www.michigansuburbsalliance.org/downloads/joint_service_delivery-intergovernmental_cooperation/A_Brief_Primer_on_Regional_Collaboration.pdf.

[5] Bergstrom, A.; Clark, R.; Hogue, T.; Iyechad, T.; Miller, J.; Mullen, S.; Perkins, D.; Rowe, E.; Russell, J.; Simon-Brown, V.; Slinski, M.; Snider, A.; & Thurston, F., "Collaboration Framework-Addressing Community Capacity," National Network for Collaboration, 1995, http://crs.uvm.edu/nnco/collab/framework.html.

[6] The Ohio State University, Center on Education and Training for Employment, "A Guide for Developing Local Interagency Linkage Teams," http://literacy.kent.edu/CommonGood/Guide/stepfour.html.

[7] London, Scott, "Collaboration and Community," http://www.scottlondon.com/reports/ppcc.html.

Case Studies

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Synopsis of Case Studies

Initiating Relationships

Formal Area Meeting: Three outside groups convened a formal meeting for all cities in Morrison County to initiate relationships between them.

Joint Training: The City of Hector held a mock tornado disaster drill and invited multiple neighboring entities to participate.

Building Relationships

Bulk Purchase: Timothy Township had a day-to-day working relationship with the county highway department. This relationship led the county to invite Timothy Township to participate in a bulk purchase of road signs.

Joint Grant Application: Existing personal and professional relationships made it easy for the City of New York Mills to ask the City of Bluffton, the Town of Newton, and the Town of Bluffton to join the City of New York Mills in jointly applying for a grant.

Exchange of Services: A Roseau County Commissioner and the Mayor of the City of Roseau had a long-standing personal relationship. This relationship led to an exchange between the entities of mowing services for engineering services.

Shared Personnel: The school superintendent of the Benson Public School District had strong professional relationships. These relationships led to a successful sharing of a Technology Coordinator.

Maintaining Relationships

Shared Services: The City of Chatfield and the Chatfield Public School District successfully shared costs for the web-streaming and archiving of programming produced by Chatfield Community Television, reinforcing the strong existing working relationship.

Joint Land Acquisitions: The Town of Big Lake and the City of Big Lake have a long-term successful working relationship which has met both entities' needs, allowing joint land acquisitions to succeed.

Joint Land Acquisition: Long-standing relationships made it possible for Carver County, Scott County, the City of Carver, the City of Chaska, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), and the Metropolitan Council to jointly acquire a railroad corridor.

High Performance Partnership: Strong working relationships between leaders in Dakota County led to the formation of the High Performance Partnership Project (HiPP), a group with a formal process and specific criteria to identify and evaluate opportunities to work together.

Initiating Relationships

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Case Study

Formal Area Meeting

Contact:

Location: City of Royalton, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Andrea Lauer, Mayor
E-mail: mayor@royaltonmn.com

Type of Entity Interviewed:

City
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

Cities in Morrison County, including the City of Royalton

Lead Entity:

City of Royalton

Event:

Outside entities convened a formal area meeting which provided an opportunity to initiate relationships

Project Summary:

To encourage exploration of the benefits of working together, the Region 5 Development Commission, the Initiative Foundation, and the University of Minnesota Extension Services convened an area meeting for all cities in Morrison County. The goal was to provide an opportunity for neighboring entities to share ideas for working together.

After the initial meeting, the Mayor of Royalton and the Administrator for the City of Pierz met to explore ways to bring the cities together and to foster cooperation. The Mayor of Royalton, who had existing relationships with other mayors in the area, invited the mayors, their staff, and council members to explore potential joint efforts. The City Administrator of Pierz had previously stepped in to help the City of Upsala during a transition between clerks. This already-existing working relationship and the good will that it generated allowed the Pierz City Administrator to reach out to the City of Upsala to encourage attendance at these meetings.

The elected officials and staff in attendance identified areas where, from their experience and viewpoint, cooperation between the cities in Morrison County might be beneficial, including transportation, community programming, engineering and public works, city council training, general administration, and public safety. The meetings and discussions continue.

Accomplishments to Date:

- The cities in Morrison County and Morrison County have established a tradition of meeting regularly to identify and resolve area issues.

- Elected officials and staff from neighboring entities got to know one another.

- New opportunities for cooperative efforts between the cities in Morrison County and Morrison County have been identified.

Related Experience:

In January 2011, the City of Royalton entered into a Mutual Aid Agreement with the City of Rice, which is located in Benton County. The Mutual Aid Agreement covered a range of areas including police, fire and rescue, public works, and administration. The Agreement is providing an example that the cities in Morrison County and Morrison County are using as a basis for exploring how to address common issues.

Tips for Success:

- Step up to lead-volunteer;

- Invite council members from neighboring areas;

- Include staff members on the invitation list;

- Find dates and times convenient for everyone and then keep the same days/time for the meetings;

- Keep meetings short - one hour, if possible;

- Limit topics of discussion (pick one);

- Consider using an agenda;

- Expect everyone in attendance to participate and to learn from one another;

- E-mail discussion points to all attendees ahead of time;

- E-mail a meeting reminder a week before the next meeting; and

- Attendees should identify areas for possible cooperation.

Case Study

Joint Training

Contact:

Location: City of Hector, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Barbara Hoyhtya, City Administrator
E-mail: hector@hcctel.net

Type of Entity Interviewed:

City
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

City of Hector, City of Bird Island, City of Fairfax, City of Buffalo Lake, City of Olivia, and Renville County

Lead Entity:

City of Hector

Event:

Mock Tornado Disaster Drill

Project Summary:

In response to one of the largest tornado outbreaks in Minnesota history, the City of Hector invited multiple neighboring entities to participate in a mock tornado disaster drill. The City invited to the drill law enforcement agencies, fire departments, ambulance services, and emergency managers from the Cities of Bird Island, Fairfax, Buffalo Lake, Olivia, and Renville County. The purpose of the drill was to train emergency personnel to act quickly and safely during a disaster.

All participants practiced their skills and learned valuable tactics while gaining experience working together with other entities to respond to a major disaster. This positive experience spurred additional meetings and conversations about ways to work together, such as sharing equipment between communities, joint purchasing of equipment, and joint training opportunities.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Elected officials and staff from neighboring entities got to know one another.

- New opportunities for working together between the cities in Renville County and Renville County have been identified and continue to be identified.

- Trust between entities has increased because of the immediate success of this discrete project (the drill).

- Because all participants experienced success, enthusiasm for additional cooperative efforts has increased.

Related Experience:

A relationship already existed between the City of Hector and the City of Buffalo Lake. In the past, the City of Hector worked successfully with the City of Buffalo Lake to bid jointly for snow removal units. Due to the larger number of snow removal units, more vendors were willing to bid on snow removal, thereby reducing the cost for both cities.

Tips for Success:

- Meet frequently (at least quarterly) to increase the likelihood that opportunities for future cooperative efforts will be identified;

- Make sure representatives from your council and staff are present at these meetings;

- Keep communication open; and

- Be patient: As talks evolve, ideas tend to come forward.

Building Relationships

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Case Study

Bulk Purchase

Contact:

Location: Timothy Township, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Mary A. Geiger, Clerk
E-mail: timothytownship@yahoo.com

Type of Entity Interviewed:

Township
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

Crow Wing County (Highway Department) and Timothy Township

Lead Entity:

Crow Wing County (Highway Department)

Event:

Bulk purchase of road signs

Project Summary:

In 2011, at the invitation by letter from the Crow Wing County Highway Department, cities and townships in Crow Wing County, including Timothy Township, participated in the bulk purchase of road signs. Buying in bulk lowered the cost for all. This transaction was simple and successful. There were no barriers or obstacles to overcome.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Quantifiable success (signs purchased at lower prices).

- Entities got to know each other better.

- Trust increased between entities because the transaction was smooth and successful.

- Because of the success of this purchase, working with neighboring entities on a future joint project is more likely.

Related Experience:

Timothy Township contracts with a neighboring township for fire protection and snow removal, and reports that the arrangement has been very positive.

Tips for Success:

- Develop relationships with neighboring entities during your regular daily business.

Case Study

Joint Grant Application

Contact:

Location: City of New York Mills, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Darla Berry, City Clerk
E-mail: darlanymcity@arvig.net

Type of Entity Interviewed:

City
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

City of New York Mills, City of Bluffton, Town of Newton, and Town of Bluffton

Lead Entity:

City of New York Mills

Event:

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Rehabilitation Grant:
Joint Grant Application

Project Summary:

The City of New York Mills' Clerk inquired about applying for a Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) Rehabilitation Grant. The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), responsible for state administration of these grants, encouraged group applications. The Clerk approached neighboring communities to inquire whether they were interested in participating in the joint grant application.

Existing personal and professional relationships made it easier to approach neighboring entities about the grant application. One of the relationships had developed because the New York Mills' Clerk was an election judge. An individual from one of the other entities was also an election judge and, when the elections for both entities were held in the same space, they got to know each other. This encounter made it easier for one to approach the other to discuss the possibility of a joint grant application.

Interested entities were invited to the New York Mills' City Council meeting to learn more about the grant program from an Otter Tail County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) representative. The Council meeting provided the entities an opportunity to interact with each other and to raise questions and concerns.

After the joint grant application was submitted, a problem arose. Apparently, funds for the grants would be disbursed first to the two cities. Only if money remained after 18 months would funds be disbursed to the townships. The towns were concerned when they learned this information. The City of New York Mills assured the towns that the City had been unaware of this policy at the time the joint grant application was made. The problem was resolved when the township grants were awarded before 18 months had passed.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Ability for smaller entities to take on larger projects they otherwise might not have been able to take on.

- A problem that arose was successfully addressed.

Related Experience:

The City of New York Mills participates in a wide variety of cooperative efforts with its neighbors. A relationship between the City of New York Mills and the City of Perham already existed and is being built upon. For their natural gas utilities, the City of New York Mills and the City of Perham sometimes share staff, expertise, and parts or supplies.

Tips for Success

- Take advantage of existing personal and professional relationships to work together;

- Send letters to entities identified as likely to be interested in the grant application;

- Follow up letters with phone calls;

- Get all interested entities together at the same time in one space; and

- Speak up in an honest and straight-forward way.

Case Study

Exchange of Services

Contact:

Location: Roseau County, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Jack Swanson, County Commissioner
E-mail: nswanson@wktel.com

Contact: Jeff Pelowski, Interim County Coordinator
E-mail: pelowski@co.roseau.mn.us

Type of Entity Interviewed:

County
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

Roseau County (Highway Department) and City of Roseau (Public Works Department)

Lead Entity:

Roseau County

Event:

Exchange of mowing services for engineering services

Project Summary:

A long-standing personal relationship between a County Commissioner and a Mayor and a desire to stretch the budget led to an informal exchange of services between the County of Roseau and the City of Roseau. The County was dissatisfied with the quality of mowing services provided by its then-current vendor. The City of Roseau owned several commercial-grade mowers and employed part-time workers to mow during the summer.

The County and the City decided to try a "barter" arrangement. The City of Roseau provided mowing services for the County, and the County Highway Department provided engineering services to the City on small city street projects.

The City's use of the County's engineering services increased over time. The entities decided to switch from exchanging services to contracting for the services rendered by the other entity. The success of this arrangement has led to further discussions about working together in other areas.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Quality mowing services were obtained by the County.

- Quality engineering services were obtained by the City.

- Success increased confidence and trust, making additional cooperative efforts more likely to occur.

Related Experience:

The City of Roseau and the Roseau School District have an agreement covering the shared use of sports facilities such as hockey arenas, a golf course, and tennis courts.

Tips for Success:

- Take advantage of existing personal relationships;

- Meet regularly to develop relationships if they do not already exist; and

- Trust is key.

Case Study

Shared Personnel

Contact:

Location: Benson Public Schools, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Lee Westrum, Superintendent
E-mail: lwestrum@benson.k12.mn.us

Type of Entity Interviewed:

School District
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

Benson School District, Swift County, the City of Benson, and the Swift County-Benson Hospital

Lead Entity:

Benson School District

Event:

Shared Technology Coordinator

Project Summary:

The then-serving Benson School District Superintendent had good existing relationships with neighboring entities. When the District's Technology Coordinator left, the School District hired a contractor for its technology needs. The School District's technology needs increased over the years, so the District decided to hire a full-time Technology Coordinator. The District Superintendent and the Swift County Administrator met to discuss ways they could partner to share a Technology Coordinator.

The idea of a shared coordinator was discussed at a School Board meeting and a "regularly held multi-entity meeting." In 2002, with the approval of the School Board and the respective governing bodies, the Benson School District, Swift County, the City of Benson, and the Swift County-Benson Hospital started sharing a Technology Coordinator. The Superintendent reported that sharing the Coordinator resulted in cost savings for the School District.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Successfully shared a Technology Coordinator.

- Multi-entity trust developed.

- Sharing the position saved money.

Related Experience:

A professional relationship between the Benson School District and neighboring entities already existed. Additional opportunities to work together were identified. One project is the Chippewa River Day Program, a day treatment program created from the combined efforts of Benson Public Schools, KMS Public Schools, and Swift County.

Tips for Success:

- Begin a collaborative effort where you already have trust;

- The "key [to building trust] is to get to know people before you try to enter into a complicated agreement to share key personnel or collaborate on a big project;" and

- A "collaborative effort has a much better chance of getting off the ground if the parties have a prior, trusting relationship."

Maintaining Relationships

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Case Study

Shared Services

Contact:

Location: City of Chatfield, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Joel Young, City Clerk
E-mail: jyoung@ci.chatfield.mn.us

Type of Entity Interviewed:

City
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

Chatfield Public School District, Chatfield Community Television, and the City of Chatfield

Lead Entity:

City of Chatfield

Event:

Web-streaming meetings/programming

Project Summary:

To provide greater access to and increase the transparency of its operations, the City of Chatfield made City Council meetings available for web-streaming and archiving on its website. Chatfield Community Television had already been recording and broadcasting city council meetings, school board meetings, parades, civic functions, high school sporting events, and concerts. The concern was raised that not all residents had access to the local cable service because distribution was restricted. The City identified a vendor that had developed a web-streaming service. Chatfield Community Television agreed to make its programming available for web-streaming and archiving on the City's website. After approximately six months of successful operation and positive feedback from residents, the City approached the Chatfield School Board to invite them to participate in the service and to share in the cost. A strong previous working relationship with the school district helped the City convince the district to participate.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Web-streaming of meetings, civic functions, and programming has been successful.

- The strong working relationship between the City and the School District was reinforced.

- Increased access to City and school operations for residents.

- Cost sharing saved money.

Related Experience:

Chatfield has a few dozen "sharing relationships" with neighboring entities currently in place. Almost all were initiated by the staff who do the work and who identified where resources could be shared. Most have been in place for many years and are based on mutual need and understanding.

Chatfield is currently developing the Chatfield Center for the Arts as a collaborative project. The City's Economic Development Authority (EDA) recently took possession of what was formerly an elementary school and auditorium. The collaborating partners are the Chatfield EDA and the City of Chatfield. Also involved in this effort, although less formally, are two local non-profit groups: the Chatfield Center for the Arts and Wit's End Theatre. To get this effort started, the Chatfield Public School District entered into an agreement that made the property available to the EDA. Since this site houses Chatfield Public School District's drama department, it is anticipated that the School District will become a formal collaborating partner in the future.

Tips for Success:

- Be willing to take a risk;

- Act in good faith;

- Establish clear goals;

- Establish timelines to guide the project;

- Make information available to all who are interested;

- Identify the benefits of working together to each participant;

- Be open to modification;

- Develop a complete plan and present it for consideration to all who will be involved so everyone hears the same message;

- Get expert advice when you need it and make the basis for that advice available;

- Provide sufficient time and space for decision making;

- Identify potential leaders and encourage them; and

- Step up to lead.

Case Study

Joint Land Acquisitions

Contact:

Location: Town of Big Lake, Greater Minnesota
Contact: Ken Warneke, Treasurer
E-mail: bltwp@izoom.net

Type of Entity Interviewed:

Town
Greater Minnesota

Entities Involved:

Town of Big Lake and the City of Big Lake

Lead Entity:

Town of Big Lake

Event:

Joint Land Acquisitions

Project Summary:

In 1992, a major manufacturing firm who had located in the Town of Big Lake needed water and sewer services. The Town of Big Lake and the City of Big Lake met and worked out an orderly annexation plan for the 380.55 acres that lay between Highway 10 and the railroad tracks. The land was ideally suited for commercial and industrial development. Both entities agreed to jointly finance the infrastructure for an industrial park and to jointly share the tax revenues derived from the area. Later, when the Town of Big Lake decided to acquire land on the north side of Highway 10 to expand the industrial park, it invited the City to participate jointly in the acquisition and development. More recently, 38 acres to the north of the industrial park were jointly acquired for further development of the park.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Working relationship between the two entities was strengthened.

Related Experience:

The Town of Big Lake and City of Big Lake have a strong, well-established working relationship. The entities first worked together starting with the joint ownership and operation of the Big Lake Fire Department.

The Town of Big Lake and City of Big Lake jointly sponsor an annual dog vaccination clinic, initiated by the Town and held in the Town Hall. In addition, both sponsor with the nearby Town of Orrock a joint Annual Clean-Up Day Event.

Tips for Success:

- Meet regularly to discuss new ways to work together;

- Set aside the past and work for the good of the future;

- Take an "area approach" and do not argue about boundaries;

- Take into account the financial viability of each entity before entering into any "shared responsibility" agreement; and

- When working with towns, take annexation off the table and consider sharing services as an alternative to annexation.

Case Study

Joint Land Acquisition

Contact:

Location: Carver County, Metro Area
Contact: Marty Walsh, Parks Director
E-mail: mwalsh@co.carver.mn.us

Type of Entity Interviewed:

County
Metro Area

Entities Involved:

Carver County, Scott County, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT), the City of Chaska, the City of Carver, and the Metropolitan Council

Lead Entity:

Carver County

Event:

Joint Land Acquisition

Project Summary:

Carver County was notified by the Union Pacific Railroad that approximately five miles of railway corridor in the Southwest Metro was about to be abandoned. The County met with neighboring entities to discuss its acquisition. Each entity had greatly differing ideas about new uses for the railroad corridor. The interests expressed at the meeting included the use of the corridor for future transportation needs, trails, utilities, roadway expansion, flood protection, sanitary sewer, street crossing, and historic preservation. An agreement was reached on how the corridor would be preserved and used. A joint powers agreement was created, and the purchase was negotiated in 2011.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Successful joint acquisition met all participating entities' needs.

Related Experience:

Over the years, relationships were established between Carver County and its neighboring entities through ongoing interactions between them at the staff and executive level on a variety of issues. Issues included roadways, parks, open space, and other city and county planning work. The relationships between the neighboring entities get stronger with each new project.

Tips for Success:

- Be flexible;

- Be open minded;

- Get all concerns out on the table;

- Consider different perspectives;

- Be honest about your perspectives;

- Be willing to work closely with other entities; and

- Be willing to "cost participate" in the project.

Case Study

High Performance Partnership

Contact:

Location: Apple Valley, Metro Area
Contact: Mary Hamann-Roland, Mayor
E-mail: info@ci.apple-valley.mn.us

Type of Entity Interviewed:

City
Metro Area

Entities Involved:

Dakota County and the Cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, Sunfish Lake, and West St. Paul

Event:

Meetings of the High Performance Partnership (HiPP)

Project Summary:

For many years, mayors and managers of several cities in Dakota County have met monthly to explore and implement cooperative efforts. In 2003, the High Performance Partnership (HiPP) was established. The HiPP is made up of community and local leaders and uses a formal process to identify and evaluate cooperative opportunities for cities within Dakota County and the County. The goal is to identify ways to work together that enhance service delivery, reduce the cost of delivering the services, or both.

A Steering Committee, made up of interested elected and appointed officials, includes representatives from Dakota County and 12 cities from within Dakota County. Six active subcommittees each research one topic that has been selected by the Steering Committee. The subcommittee reports its research on the topic back to the Steering Committee where the decision is made to proceed or not.

Accomplishments to Date:

- Developed a formal process to identify and select projects that are highly likely to be successful.

- Created a "culture of cooperation."

Related Experience:

One collaborative effort that was implemented as a result of the HiPP process was the Dakota Communications Center, the consolidated county-wide 911 dispatch center. This effort resulted in approximately $8M in savings since 2007. The savings were primarily the result of spending less on capital equipment costs for one center rather than purchasing equipment for the six previously-planned individual dispatch centers.

Tips for Success:

- Build relationships based on cooperation, trust, and open communication;

- Be a good listener;

- Show respect and use a civil tone;

- Value everyone's ideas;

- Use consensus to narrow the focus;

- Share resources;

- Challenge each other to use creativity to meet needs;

- Encourage and consider new and unconventional ideas; and

- "Champions are necessary for [collaborations] to be effective."

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Appendix

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